

12 Embracing New Paradigms in Educational Technology: Enhancing Access to Learning in Higher Education in Kenya

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1 Abstract

The thrust of this paper is an argument that by embracing new paradigms in educational technology, Kenya can effectively enhance access to learning in higher education. The demand for higher education worldwide is growing at a tremendous rate and many public universities which peg their admissions on bed space are unable to meet these demands. In addition, there is a huge population of people who cannot access education through the conventional modes; these include the working class in society who would like to further their education without leaving their places of work, and the various groups of people who cannot directly register under the regular conventional education due to the demands of their professional engagements or orientations. The current attempts by universities in Kenya to meet this demand have largely taken the form of the establishment of satellite campuses in different parts of the country. However this has created many challenges: the inability to improve facilities available, but more especially it has stretched the human resource in these institutions. Furthermore, it does not fully address the needs of the special groups of people. Such a scenario is due to the fact that the provision of learning is still based on the traditional forms of educational technologies under the conventional education mode. It is our argument in this paper that there is a need for a paradigm shift which calls for the utilisation of new forms of educational technologies to give diversified and better quality education in institutions of higher learning. A shift in the types of educational technologies used would cater for the needs of this special group of people. Some of these technologies which we discuss in this paper include: the Internet, e-mail, video teleconferencing, virtual learning and computer-assisted learning, among others forms of technology that have found a home in open and distance education. This is done against the background of the philosophies that inform the integration of these technologies into the instructional process.

2 Introduction

Education is considered as a means of nurturing the greatest abilities necessary for the development of the person and the society in which they live. Education for a long time was considered as an “equalising tool.” However, due to the great need for development and growth of economies worldwide, this notion has changed. In today’s society, the level of education needed by an individual to favourably compete and thrive in the global economic marketplace is quite different. For instance, in the past in Kenya somebody with a primary school certificate or secondary school certificate had very high chances of teaching as a PI or SI teacher respectively, without any knowledge and skills from higher learning in the teaching profession. Then people were able to secure good jobs, with a good wage and had sufficient economic security for their lives and families (Odumbe, 2004.).

In today’s society, the path to an economically vibrant, comfortable, and successful life must include qualifications from an institution of higher learning, particularly one which is well recognised and offers quality education. The initial training in higher education (HE) by both young and

mature students and lifelong learning by adults has become a basic requirement with regard to the needs of individuals, the demands of the labour market and the nation's growth and development. We are now living in a society where the level of schooling one attains and the quality and nature of training one has, determine the nature of employment they get and the amount of money they earn for the services they render to society. Education then ceases to be an "equalising tool." In this regard Field (2000), asserts that life-long learning is now a mechanism for exclusion and control. As well as it facilitates development, it has created new and powerful inequalities. There are issues around access to knowledge and individualisation. In knowledge-based economy, those who have the lowest levels of skill and the weakest capacity for constant upgrading are less likely to find paid employment. Individualisation has also meant that access to social support mechanisms has weakened.

This has led to a situation whereby the provision for education has to be expanded in order to meet the high demand from the labour market. This has also necessitated the provision of education in more flexible learning conditions which do not place much demand on the learner like it has always been in the traditional forms of education or conventional education (CE). This paper discusses issues in the supply and demand for HE with the aim of highlighting the fact that embracing new paradigms in educational technology (ET), is a sure way of increasing access to HE, particularly in Kenya. In UNESCO (2002) Kenya is not mentioned among the few African states, namely, Botswana, Mauritius, South Africa, Cote d'Ivoire, Ghana, Burkina Faso, Tanzania, Zambia, Malawi, Zimbabwe, that have fully embraced the Open Distance Learning (ODL) mode. It is further noted that, "there are now many incentives to establish networking through national and regional associations in order to strengthen and improve capacities for open and distance learning in the African region," (Ibid, 193).

The utilisation of modern forms of ET in education, especially through ODL, is a means for enhancing and broadening opportunities for a larger population to the access to learning in HE in Kenya. Offering suggestions towards policy making for OL and DE in Kenya. Agalo (2006:193) notes that "it appears today in many learning environments in Kenya, all is grounded on education policies which narrowly focus on the institution of learning and are still driven by the notions of human capital formation, transmission-based processes and mainstreaming learners into rigid tracking system." She further notes that it has "emerged strongly that there is a need to refocus educational policies in Kenya to reflect new ideas about learners, learning processes and learning systems," (Ibid, 193).

3 Demand for Higher Education

The demand for HE worldwide is growing at a tremendous rate because of the value placed on the skills, knowledge and attitudes acquired through such training. This trend can further be attributed to the increase in participation and achievement in post-primary education and further education. There has also been a rapid change in the occupational structure of employment in the recent years. There is an increase in demand beyond the existing supply for highly skilled labour and level of qualifications. This is also coupled up with the higher wages attached to jobs requiring these levels of qualifications and the employer demands for lifelong learning.

This means that expansion of these higher institutions of learning is very important. It is highlighted in the *Sessional Paper No.1 of 2005* that university education plays a very crucial role in national development and therefore the Government wishes to provide, on a long term basis, "a framework for a sustainable, competitive and autonomous national university system ... university education and training will, therefore, need to be demand-driven, of high quality, gender sensitive, technologically informed, research supported, democratically managed and globally marketable," (P 47).

Despite the high demand for HE and its rapid expansion, "challenges to access and equity remain," (Sessional Paper No.1, 2005: 47). For instance, in Kenya, there has been a great expansion of the educational services offered by universities, particularly among the public universities. There has been a great establishment of satellite campuses in different parts of the country with the main

aim of meeting the needs of the people and the labour market by getting the services closer to the people. Alongside these, there has also been a wave of establishment of private universities countrywide.

However, this trend does not seem to have completely solved the problem of provision of widespread, quality, appropriate and relevant university education. In addition to the problem of education and facilities, access to HE which remains an issue of concern has created many challenges to learners and to human resource. In addition, the existing institutions of higher learning seem to lag behind because of the high population growth, rising cost of living and education in the country. This tends to suggest that the quality of education and services offered are not to the required standards and do not necessarily meet the needs of the society; this therefore beats the logic behind the establishment of the numerous institutions of HE.

It is vital that the possible scenarios of demand for HE and how this demand can best be reflected in determining the size and shape of HE be examined in order to appreciate the challenges involved. It is because of these great challenges faced by the higher institutions of learning in providing education through the CE mode, that the ODL mode is deemed appropriate in addressing the demand. It is possible that ODL mode will increase access to HE because it is less costly, more effective and an efficacious alternative to CE. Taneja (1990: 337), notes that in the recent past:

The world has witnessed three prominent phenomena – explosion of population, explosions of knowledge and explosion of aspiration. In the wake of these explosions, a greater number of people aspire for more and more knowledge to increase their competence in the arts of life and efficiency in their profession. Hitherto the formal system of education reigned supreme. No longer can it cope with the ever-increasing and diverse demands on education, required to cater for larger numbers of people needing education suiting their particular genius – taste, ability and temperament.

ODL mode is likely to meet the need of participation with fair and equal opportunities to learning in HE because of its flexibility in provision and access. There is growing demand from the younger generation for full time initial HE, and from the older, part-time and postgraduate studies.

4 Access to Learning in Higher Education

As established, the demand for education at all levels of learning worldwide has gone up. This growing demand for education has affected the issue of access to education and especially at higher levels of learning. There are many issues and challenges surrounding access to HE, among them are: funds – tuition fees, stationery money and living expenses; time for study; duration of the degree programmes; location and distance; equity and gender; minority and marginalised groups; large populations; home and family commitments; nature of employment; age at which learning is undertaken, and grades attained at secondary school.

These issues naturally render the supply of HE limited in many unique ways. It is imperative that the issue of demand and supply to HE be examined in the light of the issues of access to HE. This will enable the educational planners and implementers to eradicate some of the barriers that prevent potential students from attaining HE and consequently enabled them to establish stronger economic bases. It should be noted that economic returns from HE are not only positive for the individual, but also for the nation and the world at large. This is because university graduates are the primary source of highly skilled professionals who are required for a nation's rapidly growing economy in the various sectors and industry.

In the endeavour to reduce the gap that exists between access and demand for HE, the use of modern educational technology, particularly through the different forms of ODL is advocated for. Concerning strategies to deliver on 2012 education goals with an aim of improving access, quality and equity, *The Kenya Vision 2030* outlines several factors. Among these are: increasing enrolment in public universities by de-linking admissions from availability of bed-spaces in campuses, supporting development of private universities, introducing ODL to cater for the financially disadvantaged people, and introducing e-learning and blended learning as an alternative delivery system. This means

that the Government is committed to integrating modern forms of educational technology into higher learning to meet the escalating demand for HE and the country's desire to be economically stable by 2030.

5 ODL Mode

CE as opposed to ODL is quite different and seems to present rigidity in its mode of provision of education. ODL has been used in many learning situations and has made major contributions to the quality of education that is offered. This is possible because ODL employs modern educational technology in the delivery process; it actually presents a perfect paradigm shift in the application of ET.

In order to understand what is involved in this concept about learning, we will begin by conceptualising what would be considered the broader forms of ODL because they directly form the concept ODL; these are Open learning (OL) and Distance Learning (DL). Second, we will look at the benefits of ODL and the various forms and variations of technology and media used that render ODL an appropriate means through which access to higher education in Kenya can be enhanced. It is important to note that the terms "open" and "distance" are considered different with regard to their features however they are used interchangeably in various literatures to refer to any form of flexible learning that takes place through "modern" educational technology including the Internet. Ogw (2004:11) attempts to make this distinction when she observes that:

Whereas the "open" concept focuses on the establishment of barrier free conditions across the OL and DE parameters *viz* entry criteria, location, time, pace methods, and others, the concept "distance" focuses on delivery of education mediated by technology. In actual open and distance education delivery and practice, the "open" and "distance" concepts converge, such that the qualities and characteristics across the two concepts (some of which are common to both) are sourced freely, in accordance with the educational environment, and resources, among other, of the provider, and needs of the learners.

It is due to such knowledge and understanding that there are certain similar features between DE and OL that the whole concept of ODL has come into being.

6 Open Education/Learning

The terms "education" and "learning" are used interchangeably along with the word "open". The word "open" implies that there is no specific wall to mark the boundaries of the nature of instruction that should be offered in open education (OE). Open learning (OL) "emphasises" provision of education, which tries to remove barriers that prevent gaining access to education at any given level. It is the provision of barrier-free access to education – open as to people, open as to places, open as to methods, open as to ideas (Ogw, 2004:10). Ogw further goes ahead to outline seven factors that she considers characterise OE or OL, as: open learning opportunities; open access; duration and purpose; purpose determines duration of programme; can be used for part-time or full time students; delivered at flexible places; adoption of available materials to suit learner needs and utilisation of a wide range of teaching strategies, methods and media.

The educational philosophy of OL emphasises giving learners a choice about the medium or media, the place of study, the pace of study, the support mechanisms and the entry and exit points among other issues. Thus this type of learning has to do with the "removal of restrictions, exclusions and privileges; by the accreditation of students' previous experiences; by the flexibility of the management of the time variable; and by substantial changes in the traditional relationship between professors and students..." (Kegaan, 1986).

7 Distance Education/Learning

The term Distance Education (DE) strongly implies that the aspect of distance should not be a hindering factor to the access of education. It is an organised process by educational institutions as opposed to home study and others of the kind. It also implies learning without the physical presence of the teacher or instructor and so communication heavily relies on technology and the various forms of media. It “is a modality which permits the delivery of a group of didactic media without the necessity of regular class participation where the individual is responsible for his own learning,” (Escolet, 1980: 144 in Kegaan, 1986). It “is a planned teaching learning system in which student and instructor are separated by geographic distance and by time. Delivery of the educational content is by well-designed materials through communication technology such as television, video/ audio tape/cassette, radio broadcast, computer-based, Internet-based or print (Ogw, 2004:9).”

In order to understand this further, Ogw (2004) outlines the characteristics of DE/DL as: separation of time and location between educator and learner; use of communication technology vis a vis the other forms of material in ODL; provision for two-way communication mechanism, feedback must be effective; interactive course materials that carry the educational content; flexible time; time compressed or expanded; self-paced, flexibility in learning schedules; flexible location, learner preferred location; no limits to class size; open entry criteria; wholly or partially self-supporting and a varied forms of student academic support avenues.

Having looked at these two definitions, it is imperative that we look now at how these characteristics of ODL would practically be applied to enhance access to higher education, and in particular, Kenya.

8 ODL and Access to Higher Education

ODL is nowadays considered as the most viable means for broadening educational access while improving the quality of education, advocating peer-to-peer collaboration and giving the learners a greater sense of autonomy and responsibility for learning (Calvert, 2006). It is further observed in UNESCO (2002:20) that “in effort to meet the new and changing demands for education and training, open and distance learning may be seen as an approach that is at least complementary and under certain circumstances an appropriate substitute for face-to-face methods that still dominate educational systems ... to the learner, ODL means freedom of access, and thereby a wider range of opportunities for learning and qualification.” This directly supports what is pointed out by Taneja (1990: 337), that the advent of the age of science and technology and its intensive application in every aspect of life, that is:

Political, socio-cultural and economic – changed the conditions, needs, demands and aspirations of the individual and the value contents of the society. It is quite natural to expect that sound and relevant education caters to the emerging knowledge, needs and skill aspirations of the dynamic society. Finding the formal system of education incapable of meeting the changes and new challenges, the nations felt committed to search for alternatives with the view to broadening the paths of learning. As a result the non-formal and informal modes of learning surfaced up to shaper focus. In recent years open-learning ... has become a coin of legal educational tender.

ODL has been recognised by the Government of Kenya as a tool that can be used to enhance access to higher learning. Among the many strategies suggested to be used in meeting the needs of access, equity and quality education, are: to promote open universities and DE as a means of increasing learning opportunities; to create incentives for improvement of infrastructure in all local universities; and to ensure integration of internship into the training system to enhance relevance and productivity, (Sessional Paper No.1, 2005). These ideas suggest a situation where the Government through MOES&T is committed to providing quality HE to as many Kenyans as possible. This would in turn increase the number of skilled and professional labour which is believed would increase productivity in all sectors of the country and hasten development.

It is noted in *The Kenya Vision 2030* that despite the rapid changes in domestic labour markets, the global environment, and advances in technology, university graduate specialisation has remained relatively unchanged over the past decade. This can be directly linked to the observation made by Rogers (2000:19) regarding paradigm shift and technology integration for HE in the new millennium. He notes that:

They require set of skills or technology competencies for each instructor does not insure technology will be used in the classroom or that it will be used effectively to enhance instruction. Implementing technology competencies may be a catalyst, but effective use of technology in the classroom will require a paradigm shift from “teaching” to “learning”, which will require adequate training in technology and learning styles, as well as adequate technical support... for universities to remain competitive...they must develop cohesive training programmes with emphasis on learning and provide adequate technical support that will assist faculty in integrating technology into instruction.

There is therefore need to re-orient education to focus on the changing economic and technological trends. “Technological development allows for new paradigms of access and new delivery systems, linked to new types of demand,” (UNESCO, 2002:41). This can best be attained through the embracing of ODL mode into university education.

UNESCO (2002) outlines several factors that render ODL important. These factors are: increasing of access to learning and training opportunities, extension of geographical access to education, provision of speedy and efficient training for key target groups, expansion of the capacity for education in new and multidisciplinary subject areas, offering of the combination of education with work and family, developing of multiple competencies through recurrent and continuing education, enhancement of the international dimension of educational experience, improvement of the quality of existing educational services, provision of increased opportunities for updating, retraining and personal enrichment, improvement cost-effectiveness of educational resources, enhancement and consolidation of capacity, supports the quality and variety of existing educational structures and balancing of inequalities between age groups.

These unique features of ODL, its application of varied modern forms of ET and varied modes of delivery and organisation, render it an appropriate tool for reducing the barriers to access to HE; thus meeting the demands of the populations and the labour market. ODL is open to all people at all times and levels; has flexible academic admission requirements and course duration; is not limited to space; is sensitive to student personal needs and motivation, experience and training thus allowing the students to comfortably explore their interests, meeting their needs and aspirations.

Furthermore, ODL mode is closely linked to open school or free school systems where terms of provision are not rigid; learning takes place in very flexible learning environments. Examples of such systems are: open university, virtual university, consortium, dual mode university, mixed mode university and single mode university, among others. These help to create and enhance learning communities, lifelong learning, collaborative learning, cooperative learning, correspondence education, independent study programmes, blended learning, e-learning, home study, external studies, continuing education, distance teaching, self-instruction, adult education, technology-based or mediated education, learner-centred education, open access, flexible learning, open learning and distributed learning, among others. It is vital to note that learning is not just about being in “school” there is a lot of informal learning that takes place in ODL situation. In ODL, learners are more open to information around them. One learns from other people, media, social surrounding, and the environment.

ODL uses a wide and varied range of technology (media). Therefore, many modes of delivery are used because there are many ways of using technology to support instruction. Before the coming of computers, a number of other forms of technology like the film, radio and television were already in use at varying degrees. The advent of computers brought a great revolution and a great focus on the computer-based technologies and instruction. This brought about the use of multimedia in learning. Thus a wide range of media, for example, audiotape, video tape, Internet, and mobile phones are put to use in varied contexts, such as interactive video, audio-teleconferencing, video-

teleconferencing, audiographic communication, Internet-based access to website resources, and computer-mediated communication, among others.

9 Challenges in Using Educational Technology in ODL

Using modern and varied forms of ET that are part and parcel of ODL has numerous advantages in the general educational processes. Despite the advantages of integrating technology into education, embracing it must be done with great caution so as not to undermine the goals of instruction in a given curriculum especially in situations where ODL has been embraced. Situations where integration between the traditional and modern forms of ED would be beneficial. This implies that the curriculum implementers have to make sound decisions concerning the kinds of ET to use and integration appropriately applied in situations where both forms of technology are required.

The greatest challenge is: how far has the Kenyan education system, particularly at higher levels, adapted to the use of ODL as a means of creating more avenues to access to learning in HE? The following are some of the factors that must be considered for ODL to be successfully implemented and extended:

9.1 *Learning Materials*

Learning materials in ODL must communicate effectively. The designers of the materials must begin by understanding their intended users (Shneiderman, 1992) with aim to “communicate to others as they would communicate unto themselves,” (Horton, 1994:32). The success of any ODL programme lies in the level of interactivity in the learning materials. The materials should be able to express and promote the various levels of interaction as noted by Anderson (2003). According to him, the six levels of interaction adopted for ODL learning materials are: student/student, student/content, student/teacher, teacher/content, teacher/teacher, and content/content. Sherry (1996) highlights four levels of interactions as: teacher and students, students and learning environment, student and student, and active learning in the classroom. However, interactivity takes many forms; it is not just limited to audio and video, or solely to teacher-student interactions. It represents a connectivity the students feel with the distance teacher, the local teachers, the aids, the facilitators, and their peers. Without interaction, then ODL becomes “independent study.” ODL materials take the place of the teacher. Consequently, they have to be designed to provide for the dialogue experienced in CE. Therefore training of the staff engaged in preparation and development of ODL course materials is vital for effective learning to take place. According to Naidu (1994), the materials are considered self-instructional once developed, and students are expected to be able to progress with their studies independently with least amount of support.

9.2 *Tutor Skills and Experience*

Practical experience shows that indeed many tutors do not have the basic skills and training to effectively use the modern forms of ET to positively impact on the learning process. In the developing world, tutors lack the ability to effectively inco-operate these educational technologies into learning, they lack the expertise required for their effective and efficient use. Tutors need some specialised forms of training, guidance and exposure to be able to use these forms of educational technology in ODL situations.

9.3 *Students' Abilities and Skills*

In order for students to effectively operate and use the different forms of educational technology in ODL situations, they require specialised knowledge and skills. This means that before enrolling into the programme, the students have to go through training and induction to enable them benefit from the instruction processes. The success of any programme that integrates technology into instruction will greatly be influenced and determined by students' own characteristics and personality. Outgoing and fast learners are more likely to adapt to and accommodate new forms of

educational technology; they will tend to have greater interest and curiosity as compared to slow learners who may tend to shy off and hold on to the older forms of education.

9.4 Cost

The cost of the new forms of educational technology is high for most of the institutions that may wish to use ODL and have to incorporate their use into the instructional process. In case an institution has decided to use this equipment, then the issue of cost is made more complex by the fact some of these instructional equipment require maintenance when they breakdown, which means an extra cost.

9.5 Environmental Factors

Availability of certain resources where the learners chose to take their studies from will either limit or enhance learning through ODL. It is within the environment that the necessary resources and equipment needed for smooth running of such programmes are found. Such factors include: electricity, appropriate equipment and infrastructure.

9.6 Tutor and Student Attitudes

There are cases where many of the tutors and students who are supposed to use the new forms of technology for instruction have negative attitudes towards their use. This can be explained by the fact that most of them are technophobic, and this acts a great barrier to the usage of these forms of ET. They view technology as too complicated and sophisticated, and this creates a mental blockage and thus lack of confidence to use it. Most of them are very at home with CE and are not ready at all to adapt to change (Odumbe, 2004.)

9.7 Time

The use of educational technology for instruction is quite a demanding job on the part of the tutor, not only in terms of technical skills and knowledge required but also in time. The time available is considered in terms of preparation before instruction process. Due to student's freedom, limited or no physical interaction with the tutor and the student's experiences during the instruction process, the tutor has to spend more time structuring the learning processes, activities and materials in order for them to facilitate the learner in carrying out the learning activity effectively and efficiently.

9.8 Equipment Maintenance

Most of the modern forms of educational technology that is required require maintenance through frequent servicing. This creates extra work for the tutors who have to make arrangements to have the equipment checked time to time. Beside this, the equipment is subject to breaking down at any time, especially with prolonged periods of use.

9.9 Learner Support Facilities

Looking at systems in ODL, Sherry (1996), notes that although technology is an integral part of DE, any successful programme must focus on the instructional needs of the students, rather than the technology itself. This implies that, the learners require great support due to the fact that limited physical interaction that exists between them and their tutors, their physical learning environment and even among themselves. Naidu (1994), argues that due to nature of isolation experienced by ODL learners, many lack the ability to develop appropriate study skills. This results into learners' frustration and dropout, hence the importance of supporting them through the programme. Learner support systems take up different forms: provision for extra reading material through electronic means, guidance and counselling services, orientation, financial aid, library support, social support, tutorial services and provision of interactive learning materials, among others.

9.10 Media-Based Issues

There is a wide range of media at the tutors' disposal in ODL programmes. They need to compare the effectiveness of the different forms of ET which deliver similar content to similar audience, and be able to establish the various factors that influence successful delivery of content (Sherry, 1996). The choice of media, whether print or non-print, audio-video technology or multimedia systems will also be determined by the delivery mode. Thus the media in ODL should be appropriate to facilitate learning without help from the tutor. Forms of instructional technology that can serve HE include: computers, Internet, videoconferencing, teleconferencing, telephone (mobile), broadcast video, net meeting, voice mail, videocassette, audiocassette, e-mail, and internet chat. Below, we highlight the electronic media.

9.11 Computer as Multimedia

Most of the types of technology listed above fall under the category of electronic or digital multimedia. Multimedia is a new communications media that combines the use of text, graphics and photos, audio, video and other forms of data to enhance the computer's role as a tool for learning and teaching. ODL can take advantage of its characteristics that support educational purposes such as being digital and interactive, dynamic and homogeneous, and the content can be converted, stored and accessed.

9.12 Internet

Copen, (1995, 44-7) observes that the Internet is a worldwide publicly accessible series of interconnected computer networks that transmit data by packet-switching using standard Internet Protocol (IP). There is a lot of educational material on the Internet. Many scholars, researchers and publishing companies have put their materials online. It is now common practice in the developed world (such as the US and the EU) for those dealing with information technology such as library service to speak of virtual libraries. This technology has revolutionised the process of instruction that has supported the development of ODL.

9.13 Videoconferencing

Videoconferencing is a set of interactive telecommunication technologies which allow two or more locations to interact via two-way video and audio transmissions simultaneously. It has also been called visual collaboration and this is the value developed countries exploit for instructional purposes; particularly in ODL in HE.

Videoconferencing enables participants in HE to take part in a two-way communications platform. In addition, instructors the world over are brought into classrooms in remote or isolated places; provided there is connectivity. Moreover, researchers in HE can collaborate with colleagues at other institutions on regular basis without loss of time due to travel.

9.14 E-mail

This is a store and forward method of writing, sending, receiving and saving messages over electronic communications system. ODL has made effective use of this, thus opening up the learning space and enabling people to access education from any part of the world. However, the technology requires the user to have access to the Internet via a computer or a mobile phone.

9.15 Mobile Phone

Sachs (2008) observes that:

Mobile communication is perhaps the single most transformative technology for rural African villages to improve access to healthcare and education, create new business opportunities and access to markets, and ultimately to help eradicate extreme poverty. We are excited by the tremendous opportunities which mobile phones make possible

in every kind of community and economic activity-ranging from pastoralists and farmers, to traders, health workers and teachers. This is equally available to ODL practitioners.

10 Conclusion

The present trend in demand for HE in Kenya points at a future rise in the demand. More Kenyans are aspiring to attain HE as initial professional training, there are those who are constantly seeking for opportunities to further their studies. While there are those who wish to update and refresh their knowledge and skills with a view of getting promotion, changing jobs, improving their careers and earning more money. This ideas are based on the facts that there is a professional and economic competitive environment developing in Kenya due to the economic benefits of participating in HE to be gained by individuals and the society at large.

It is thus the responsibility of any nation to make the access to HE a reality by making it attainable and affordable. Through this kind of provision for education, the Government's limit on student numbers in HE should be done away with. Instead, individual demand should determine the size and shape of HE provision. All people, despite their age and reason for studying, have the right to have their dreams fulfilled by attending university education. Through the provision of HE, future generations will not feel denied a lifetime opportunity of enhancement and fulfilment. This will only happen if accessibility to HE is increased so as to meet the escalating demand. Education should continue being viewed as the greatest tool for economic growth and development for both the individual and the entire nation.

It is the view of this paper that ODL as a form of utilising new and diversified forms of ET can be an effective tool for bridging the gap that exists between demand and access to HE in Kenya. If the long term strategic plan for education and training as expressed in *The Kenya Vision 2030*, in responding to increased demand for higher education, is adhered to, then Kenya is likely to attain an economic development, sustainability and stability due to the services that will be rendered by a more knowledgeable and skilled human resource. This is well summed up in Agalo (2006: 195), who observes that "If we believe this and are serious about elaborating policy statements for the emergence of OL and DE in the Kenyan educational system, then we must also be concerned with the ideas of transforming the educational system and as such, develop strong policy frameworks and processes."

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